Women officers in armed forces

*520. DR. D. VENKATESHWAR RAO: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state the measures taken to induct more women officers in the armed forces?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): The following measures have been taken to increase the intake of women officers in Armed Forces:—

Army

(a) Annual intake of women officers has been increased from 50 to 100.

(b) Initial duration of five years' commission has been made extendable upto 10 years in case of optees.

(c) Issueless widows / divorcees have been made eligible for induction.

(d) The women candidates have now been made eligible to apply against overall vacancies in various technical, nontechnical and specialist appointments. This has broadened the selection base as veil as employability of lady officers.

Air Force

The planned induction for women candidates in the non-technical ground duty branches has been increased from 10% to 15% of the total cadre.

Navy

It has been decided to induct women officers in the Air Traffic Controller Cadre of the Executive Branch in addition to the Education Branch, Logistics and Law Cadres of the Executive Branch.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Threats of nuclear attack

3831. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: WiU the Minister of DE FENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that cities which house the defence estabishments are exposed to the threats of nuclear attacks, in the light of changed security scenario; and

(b) if so, what are the measures proposed by Government to protect the properties and lives of people living in these dangerous zones?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHR,I GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Government have seen media reports about some Pakistani nuclear scientists, who having defected to western countries, have revealed Pakistan Government's plan for pre-emptive nuclear strikes against India. Government have also noted from these reports the many inconsistencies that have been pointed out in the account of one of these "nuclear scientists". At the same time, such reports, proven or otherwise, vindicate steps taken by the Government to create a secure deterrent against the use or threat of use of weapons of mass destruction against India. Goverment have closely monitored the acquisition of clandestine ballistic missile and nuclear weapons capability by Pakistan. It has also noted statements by Pakistani leaders in this regard. Government will continue to take the requiste steps to safeguard the India's security and national interests and will constantly exercise the utmost vigilance in this regard.

Flying Supervisors lacking institutf.onal expertise

3832. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the flying instructors and senior flying supervisors

manning the flying training establishments lack institutional expertise in their field and are not fully professionally com petent, which is affecting the trainees competence; and

(b) if so, the steps beinj' taken to upgrade the skill of the present incumbents or to appoint duly qualified instructors?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) The flying instructors and senior flying supervisors posted to flying training establishments are carefully selected depending on their qualifications and experience. Before a pilot is posted as an instructor, he undergoes a rigorous 6 months course for flying instructional duties. Moreover, constant checks are maintained to review the performance of trainee pilots to ensure the qualitative aspects of training.

(b) Not applicable in view of answer (a) above. However, various courses/ examinations are conducted regularly to hone the skills of the instructors.

MBT Arjun

3833. SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Main Battle Tank (MBT) project approved in 1974 at a cost of Rs. 15.50 crore was revised and raised to Rs. 56.50 crore and Rs. 280.80 crore respectively in 1987;

(b) if so, what progress has so far been made in the project and what is the latest estimated cost thereof, indicating the costover run suffered so far; and

(c) whether any vested interests national or multi-national are operating to the detriment of the project; if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) The cost of MBT 'Arjun' project was revised to Rs. 56.66 crore in October 1980 and to Rs. 280.80 crore in March 1987. The cost was enhanced to cater for the subsequent changes in qualitative requirements and for the increased scope of the project envisaging higher number of prototypes and manufacture of pre-production series tanks.

(b) After successful completion of user trials, MBT 'Arjun' has entered limited series production phase. Tliere has been no cost-revision after March 1987.

(c) Government have not come across any evidence in this regard.

Migration from Jammu and Kashmir

3834. PROF. A. LAKSHMISAGAR:
SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that with the intermittent firing on the Indian villages along the line of actual control being continued by Pakistani troops there is large scale migration of the people from Kargil, Baramula and Kupwara districts of Jammu and Kashmir;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof stating the number of families that have migrated from the affected villages to safer places, and

(c) what steps have been taken by Government to meet any eventuality?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) Unprovoked firing from Pakistani troops across the Line of Control is a recurring phenomenon and has been continuing for years. Sometimes it affects normal life including agricultural activities of the people living in villages near the border. On a few occasions in 1997, Pakistani troops targeted civilian areas in Kargil sector and there was migration of people. During the current year, on 29/ 30 June 1998, in Kargil sector a High